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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the values presented in American and Hispanic-American children's readers. The categories of primary interest on the value scale used include: positive behavior, positive feelings, negative behavior, negative feelings, traditional values, Judeo-Christian religious values, other religious values, and neutral values. The values scale was applied to two widely used basal reader series, Scott Foresman and Houghton Mifflin, grades one-four and to seven Hispanic basal reader series of variable grade level through grade four presently used in the Chicago area. An examination of the findings revealed noticeable differences between the two American series in the categories of neutral values, positive feelings, positive behavior, and negative feelings. The stories found in the Hispanic basal readers included values that have religious and traditional moralistic overtones along with very idealistic family values and roles. On the other hand, negative behavior was also presented, such as being drunk, fighting, and treating people cruelly. The Hispanic series examined were very much in accord with Hispanic culture, especially concerning Judeo-Christian religious values and traditional values, so these values are much more prescriptive in the Hispanic series than in the American series. While it seems that the American publishers have gone to a great deal of trouble not to be offensive to any group in a pluralistic society, such is not the case with the Hispanic basal readers. (Five tables of data are included and 18 references are attached.) (MG)

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Values in American and Hispanic Children's Readers

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Abstract

Reports the results of a scale comparison of values in American and Hispanic children's readers currently used in public schools. The values categories of the scale are Positive Behavior, Positive Feelings, Negative Behavior, Negative Feelings, Traditional Values, Judeo-Christian Religious Values, Other Religious Values, and Neutral Values. The scale was applied to two American basal reader series, grades K-4, and to seven Hispanic basal reader series of variable grade levels through grade 4, and the results were tallied in two ways, a percentage tally and a frequency tally. Results are discussed in terms of value differences between the American and Hispanic books and in terms of differences between the two tallies.

Values in American and Hispanic Children's Readers

An issue that is growing in importance in today's schools is the value content of children's reading books, especially the basal readers that almost all children use. Basal readers have been closely scrutinized according to various criteria, such as racism, sexism, and patriotism, and American publishers have labored to make their basal readers inoffensive to as many groups as possible for obvious economic reasons. Since the content of books may play an important role in shaping children's thinking, the issue of which values are presented will continue to be an important one. The fact that there have been many changes in society's values as well as in children's experiences and thinking, especially over the last fifteen years, has been documented in a number of books (Elkind, 1981; Postman, 1982; Winn, 1983), and children's books reflect those changes (Knafle, 1985). The question of the presentation of values in Hispanic books that are used in American classrooms has been neglected by researchers, possibly because the main interests seem to be those of vocabulary development, skill building, and comprehension. But the issue of value content should not be overlooked since both American and Hispanic reading books are often used in the same classroom and extreme differences in values could be a source of confusion to children.

The assessment and reporting of values in children's books has presented problems because of the subjectivity and anecdotal nature of the process. Researchers generally report on selected issues and cite textual material which supports their points of view. Issues such as racism and sexism have been well documented and informative, even though they may lack the objectivity of a controlled study. Although Vitz (1985) provided a

quantitative comparison of values in different social studies textbooks, most articles provide only selected textual examples and guidelines for choosing children's books. (See Issues in children's book selection, 1973, for a compilation of articles and Sutherland & Arbuthnot, 1986, for a discussion of selection concerns.)

Closely aligned with the area of values is the area of moral development in which the work of Lawrence Kohlberg seems to dominate. Many studies have used his stages, and a number of researchers have provided critical reviews of the studies (e.g., Blasi, 1980) and have also questioned the validity of Kohlberg's stages (e.g., Kurtines & Greif, 1974; but see Broughton, 1977, for a rebuttal). Nucci and Pascarella (1987) provide a review and discussion of Kohlberg's revised stages. Researchers have applied Kohlberg's stages to children's books of various grade levels (Gosa, 1977; Hoskisson & Biskin, 1979; Moir, 1977; Readence, Moore & Moore, 1982; Stahl-Gemake & Wielen, 1984) and to Newbery winners (Rihn, 1980). However, anyone who tries to apply the stages to children's books is soon aware of the profound difficulties concerning subjectivity, in addition to the extensive training time required. Such problems may be the result of applying the stages in a way in which they were never intended to be used.

An earlier paper (Knafle, Wescott, & Pascarella, 1988) describes the development of a scale to easily assess values in children's books, from the beginning stages of compilations of values from publishers' and reviewers' descriptions, to intermediate stages of a hundred and fifty graduate and undergraduate students' experiences using extensive values category sheets in evaluating stories, and to the final grouping of several hundred categories

into eight broad categories of primary interest. The final categories, with examples, are given below.

The Values Categories, with Examples of the Categories

Positive Behavior: cooperation, generosity, helping, honesty, sharing, showing initiative, showing responsibility, showing kindness, perseverance, showing friendship

Positive Feelings: patience, liking someone, being happy, positive attitude, courage, self-confidence, feeling empathy

Negative Behavior: aggression, cheating, laziness, lying, stealing, boasting, being nasty, hurting someone on purpose

Negative Feelings: jealousy, hostility, unwarranted anger, being unhappy, selfishness, negative attitude, impatience

Traditional Values: good manners, politeness, greeting each other, neatness, respect for parents, respect for teachers, respect for authority, stereotypical family situations, patriotism, mention of (or pictures of) traditional celebrations (such as birthday parties, Thanksgiving dinner, Easter egg hunt, wedding), mention of (or pictures of) traditional things (such as Easter bunny, Santa Claus, Christmas tree)

Judeo-Christian Religious Values: trust in God, prayer, praying, forgiveness, mention of (or picture of) priest, nun, minister, rabbi, Jesus, Saint, Christmas, Easter, mass, creche, religious ceremony or festival, church, synagogue, temple

Other Religious Values: mention of (or picture of) witchdoctor, shaman, wizard, religious ceremony or festival, temple, prayer, praying (outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition)

Neutral: dreaming, eating, playing, nature description, surprise, being sick, falling down, giving an incorrect answer, accidently hurting someone, needing privacy, growing up.

Issues such as racism and sexism were not included simply because those issues are well-documented in the literature.

The Knafle et al study (1988) applied the values scale to Caldecott winners (one book has been chosen each year since 1938). In a Values x Decades analysis, there were significant differences for Values, no significant differences for Decades, and no significant interaction. The major finding was that Neutral Values were significantly greater ($p < .001$ in all comparisons) than all other value categories.

Procedure

The values scale was applied to two widely used American basal reader series, Scott Foresman and Houghton Mifflin, grades 1- 4, and to seven Hispanic basal reader series of variable grade level through grade 4. The Hispanic readers were those that were currently used in classrooms in the Chicago area. Grade 4 is the highest level of common use for the Hispanic readers.

As in the earlier study, the individual page of each book was the unit measured. Decisions as to which values a page contained were based upon a combination of text and pictures, if any, because of the illustrative and integrative nature of the two. From each book in the series, three representative stories were chosen for analysis, one from the first third of the book, one from the middle third, and one from the last third, and each page of the story was analyzed.

Each story was first analyzed individually by two raters; then the raters discussed and resolved any differences concerning individual values on given pages. (Resolving the differences was an easy task once the values criteria had been internalized.)

How the Scale Works

The scale was developed as follows: for each page, a researcher simply put a check mark or an X under the appropriate column. For example, page 1 of a book might have check marks under Positive Behavior and Positive Feelings, page 2 might have check marks under Positive Behavior, Positive Feelings, and Neutral, and page 3 might have check marks under Positive Behavior, Positive Feelings, Negative Behavior, and Neutral.

After the total number of pages were completed in that way, the results were tallied in two different ways: a) a percentage tally, and b) a frequency tally. For the percentage tally, percentage values were assigned for values for each page. Thus page 1 would have .5 for each of the two values checked, page 2 would have .333 for each of the three values checked, and page 3 would have .25 for each of the four values checked. When all the pages were assigned percentages, the percentages were totaled for each column. The percentage totals were then divided by the total number of pages, giving an overall percentage of each category (column) for the total story. So the overall percentage values for the three-page story would be Positive Behavior, 36.10%; Positive Feelings, 36.10%; Negative Behavior 8.33%; and Neutral, 19.43% (Total = 99.96%).

For the frequency tally, checks for each value were simply counted. Thus, for the above example the score for Positive Behavior would be 3; Positive Feelings, 3; Negative Behavior 1; and Neutral, 2. Each score was then divided by the number of pages (in this case, 3) to find the overall score which would be Positive Behavior, 1.00; Positive Feelings, 1.00; Negative Behavior, .33; and Neutral, .67. Table 1 gives an example of a completed story using both tallies. The advisability of having these two different tallies will become clear in the discussion of the findings.

Insert Table 1 here

Results and Discussion

Tables 2 through 5 contain the findings for the values categories for the American and Hispanic readers on the percentage tally and the frequency tally.

Insert Tables 2-5 here

American Readers

An examination of the findings for the American series (see Tables 2 and 4) reveals that there were clearly differences between the Scott Foresman and Houghton Mifflin readers in several of the values categories. The most noticeable differences were in the categories of Neutral Values, Positive Feelings, Positive Behavior, and Negative Feelings. The Scott Foresman stories were much more neutral than the Houghton Mifflin stories (68.49% vs.

38.08% in the percentage tally); the frequency tally shows that almost every page of the Scott Foresman stories contained Neutral Values (total mean = .99) compared with 3/4 of the Houghton Mifflin. The Scott Foresman stories contained about half as much in the categories of Positive Behavior, Positive Feelings, and Negative Feelings as the Houghton Mifflin stories. Traditional Values were higher for the Houghton Mifflin stories, Negative Behavior was about equal, and Religious Values were not found in either series. The content of the stories in the American basals was concerned primarily with family situations, school situations, peer relationships, adventures, games, sports, and pets. Most stories could be described as generally positive, though somewhat bland.

Hispanic Readers

The stories found in the Spanish basal readers, especially those that originated outside of the United States, included values that have religious and traditional moralistic overtones along with very idealistic family values and roles (see Tables 3 and 5). Yet, at the same time, contrasts were seen in the area of negative behavior in themes where behaviors like being drunk, fighting, and treating another cruelly were presented.

Even though religious stories and values were not always chosen to analyze for this study, they were evident in almost every basal reader examined and were almost always oriented toward the Christmas theme. One story, "La Flor de Pascuas" (Laidlaw Bros., 1969) was about the poinsettia plant at Christmas time and its relation to the nativity. A poem at the end of ALEGRIAS, Libro Tercero de Lectura (Editorial Arica S.A., 1975, p. 158),

speaks about the birth of Jesus giving everyone "the light." In a book published by Minerva Books, Spain, 1969, p. 62), a story ends with (translated) "without a doubt the sky is the greatest wonder from God." In another story in the same book the children are told that natural things come from God and artificial things come from man.

Along with the religious values presented are secular, but very traditional, values. For example, in another of the Minerva series of books for the second level (1969, p. 71) the story ends with the quote (translated), "He who is good always get rewards." The traditional value of respecting your parents recurs in almost every story about the family along with traditional roles within the family. Traditional values are also seen in stories with political and historical themes where themes are presented in an almost propaganda-like manner.

It seems that in order to present moralistic themes, many stories went to extremes as though the moral couldn't be seen unless the contrast between good and evil was vivid. In one story, a cat and dog trick a parrot by pushing him on a life preserver into the middle of a swimming pool and while they later rescue him, the initial act was cruel. (Ediciones Anaya, 1972). In another story about a pair of boots, "Las Botas de Vino" (Ediciones Anaya, 1972), the boots find themselves in an inn where two drunk bottles of wine have come in and are trying to capture them. Still another story, "La Guerra de los Higos" (Editorial Arica S.A., 1975) shows cruelty as a group of animals are seen fighting with each other and being selfish in their treatment of one another. In "La Rana del Rio" (Laidlaw Bros., 1969), a frog boasts about being larger than a cow and finally bursts from trying to puff himself up to the cow's size.

It is clear that efforts to be value-free and religiously neutral were not made in the stories presented in the Spanish basal readers, especially those published outside of the United States.

Percentage Tally versus Frequency Tally

A close examination of Tables 2 to 5 reveals some differences between the findings on the two tallies. For example, in Tables 2 and 4 for the Houghton Mifflin series, kindergarten, the relationship between Traditional Values and Neutral Values is different in the two tallies, with Neutral Values four times greater than Traditional Values in the frequency tally, but six times greater in the percentage tally. For Houghton Mifflin, grade 1, the relationship between Negative Behavior and Negative Feelings is much closer in the frequency tally than in the percentage tally, with Negative Feelings being not quite twice as great as Negative Behavior in the frequency tally, but six times greater in the percentage tally.

For the Santillana series (see Tables 3 and 5), grade 1, Negative Behavior and Negative Feelings are equal in the frequency tally, but in the percentage tally, Negative Feelings are twice as great as Negative Behavior. For the Editorial Arica series, grade 2, Neutral Values are greater than Traditional Values in the percentage tally, while the relationship is reversed in the frequency tally, with Traditional Values being greater than Neutral Values.

The differences between the two tallies for any given book are caused by the nature of the tallies. In most comparisons, the results seem to be approximately equal. However, in comparisons when the results are not equal, the percentage tally, although more cumbersome and time consuming to use than

the frequency tally, seems to reflect a somewhat more sensitive portrayal of the book than the frequency tally. Table 1 shows that for pages 2 and 5, Negative Feelings are given the weights of 1.0 and .25 for the percentage tally and a count of 2 for the frequency tally. These differences may tend to cancel each other out when a large number of pages is examined. However, the data should be examined carefully to ensure that a value appearing only in a minor way in conjunction with other values is not equated with values that are more dominant. Such a situation could occur when there are a large number of 1.0's for a given value in the percentage tally and an equally large number of .2's (for example) for another value.

In the earlier study of the Caldecott winners (Knafle et al, 1988), the frequency tally did generate more significant pair differences than the percentage tally (19 of 28 versus 12 of 28 for the percentage tally), and there were also two outcomes concerning the different tallies. First, the frequency tally would seem especially useful when a researcher considers the possibility of combining or deleting categories from a specific analysis. Positive Behavior and Positive Feelings may be combined into Positive, Negative Behavior and Negative Feelings into Negative, and the other categories may be deleted so that an analysis can be made of the two main categories of Positive and Negative. Second, being able to compare the results of specific pages, stories, or books according to the different tallies is useful because the comparison usually reveals some interesting differences.

Not all data are appropriate for statistical analysis and such seems to be the case with these data. The earlier paper (Knafle et al, 1988) used a two-way analysis of variance (Values x Decades) for both the percentage tally

and the frequency tally, with the Newman-Keuls test subsequently applied to determine whether pair differences were significant. That analysis was appropriate because of the comparability of the books examined (Caldecott winners from the 1930's to the 1980's). The six decades and the values categories provided convenient categorization. However, the categorization in this study, wherein Spanish books currently used in the classroom were examined, was not exhaustive and consequently not really suitable for statistical analysis. That is, not all the books from a given Spanish series were used in the classrooms, nor were they available to the teachers, so only those books actually available and used were examined. Therefore it seemed appropriate to examine the tally results on an individual basis.

The tallies alone do not tell the whole story in this comparison, because the currently used Hispanic series we examined are very much in accord with Hispanic culture, especially concerning Judeo-Christian Religious Values and Traditional Values. So those values are much more prescriptive in the Hispanic series than in the American series. For public school use with non-Hispanic children studying Spanish, the books could clearly present a problem if used with non-Christian children.

There is no question that the American basal series are much more bland than the Spanish basal series as shown by the large differences in the Neutral category. While it seems that the American publishers have gone to a great deal of trouble to be offensive to no group in our pluralistic society, such is not the case with the Hispanic readers.

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Table 1

Completed Story Using the Percentage Tally and the Frequency Tally on the Values Scale

	Positive Behavior	Positive Feelings	Negative Behavior	Negative Feelings	Traditional Values	J-C Religious Values	Other Religious Values	Neutral
Values Scale Page by Page Checklist								
Page No.								
1	X.333	X.333	-	-	-	-	-	X.333
2	-	-	-	X1.0	-	-	-	-
3	-	X.5	-	-	X.5	-	-	-
4	-	X.5	-	-	-	-	-	X.5
5	X.25	X.25	-	X.25	-	-	-	X.25
Percentage Tally								
Total Score	.583	1.583	-	1.25	.5	-	-	1.083
% Score	11.66	31.66	-	25.0	10.0	-	-	21.66
Frequency Tally								
Total Score	2	4	-	2	1	-	-	3
Frequency Score[a]	.40	.80	-	.40	.20	-	-	.60

[a]Total Score divided by number of pages

Table 2

Percentage Tally Means for All Values for American Books

Grade	Positive Behavior	Positive Feelings	Negative Behavior	Negative Feelings	Traditional Values	J-C Religious Values	Other Religious Values	Neutral
				Scott Foresman, 1985				
K(PP+P)	10.16	10.21	-	-	-	-	-	79.63
1	19.67	10.97	5.56	3.84	-	-	-	59.85
2	15.63	7.62	1.39	2.32	13.13	-	-	59.89
3	9.65	11.01	1.23	7.82	3.99	-	-	66.28
4	5.55	5.47	2.14	6.71	3.33	-	-	76.78
Total	12.13	9.06	2.06	4.16	4.09	-	-	68.49
				Houghton Mifflin, 1986				
K	18.17	19.90	2.41	2.44	7.60	-	-	49.45
1	30.83	19.32	1.71	10.57	4.78	-	-	32.74
2	23.38	20.47	3.32	8.14	10.38	-	-	34.26
3	17.61	24.63	2.06	6.49	12.21	-	-	36.96
4	23.30	20.64	1.59	15.77	1.67	-	-	36.98
Total	22.66	20.99	2.22	8.68	5.34	-	-	38.08

Table 3

Percentage Tally Means for All Values for Hispanic Books

Grade	Positive Behavior	Positive Feelings	Negative Behavior	Negative Feelings	Traditional Values	J-C Religious Values	Other Religious Values	Neutral
				Editorial Arica S.A., 1975				
1	25.00	30.55	-	25.00	13.88	5.55	-	-
2	15.27	15.27	4.17	7.87	17.59	16.67	-	23.14
3	28.19	20.97	6.80	8.33	8.19	-	-	27.50
4	14.55	36.26	3.60	2.90	11.46	-	-	31.21
				Ediciones Anaya S.A. (Spain), 1972-1975				
1	35.65	17.36	14.12	21.53	5.09	-	-	6.25
2	22.22	27.31	7.87	5.09	19.91	2.31	-	15.28
3	15.51	25.23	21.06	19.67	6.48	3.70	-	8.33
4	7.22	7.22	10.00	17.77	8.88	12.22	-	36.67
				Santillana S.A. (Spain), 1970-1972				
1	22.78	55.00	3.33	6.67	-	-	-	12.22
2	11.11	33.10	9.17	20.83	-	-	-	25.79
3	19.16	31.25	6.67	11.67	2.75	-	-	28.47
				Laidlaw Brothers (U.S.A.), 1969				
K	32.78	43.01	-	7.87	2.59	-	-	13.75
1	36.67	36.67	10.00	6.67	-	-	-	10.00
2	35.92	27.58	-	5.00	5.00	12.03	-	14.44
				The Economy Co. (U.S.A.), 1977				
K	27.22	41.67	-	8.33	-	-	-	22.78
1	30.32	48.70	2.78	-	2.18	-	-	16.03
2	39.75	35.02	2.52	12.19	-	-	-	10.49
				Cannbe (U.S.A.), 1972				
1	7.44	27.42	4.55	22.63	9.72	-	-	28.22
3	16.78	23.98	3.13	32.97	9.17	-	-	13.99
4	17.06	40.10	.69	14.37	9.60	1.76	-	16.41
				Minerva Books (U.S.A., 1979, Gr.1), (Spain, 1969, Gr. 2&3)				
1	22.62	13.10	51.19	13.10	-	-	-	-
2	44.44	11.11	-	-	44.44	-	-	-
3	27.78	27.78	-	-	11.11	33.33	-	-

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Table 4

Frequency Tally Means for All Values for American Books

Grade	Positive Behavior	Positive Feelings	Negative Behavior	Negative Feelings	Traditional Values	J-C Religious Values	Other Religious Values	Neutral
				Scott Foresman, 1985				
K (PP+P)	.19	.24	-	-	-	-	-	.98
1	.43	.26	.07	.08	-	-	-	.86
2	.37	.18	.04	.05	.34	-	-	1.00
3	.21	.23	.04	.17	.08	-	-	1.00
4	.13	.12	.05	.15	.07	-	-	1.00
Total	.27	.21	.04	.09	.10	-	-	.89
				Houghton Mifflin, 1986				
K	.46	.40	.06	.08	.21	-	-	.87
1	.71	.51	.17	.27	.16	-	-	.62
2	.67	.59	.11	.24	.33	-	-	.72
3	.50	.62	.07	.19	.36	-	-	.75
4	.63	.55	.05	.35	.05	-	-	.79
Total	.59	.53	.09	.23	.22	-	-	.75

Table 5

Frequency Tally Means for All Values for Hispanic Books

Grade	Positive Behavor	Positive Feelings	Negative Behavior	Negative Feelings	Traditional Values	J-C Religious Values	Other Religious Values	Neutral
				Editorial Arica S.A., 1975				
1	.50	.67	-	.33	.33	.17	-	-
2	.42	.42	.17	.19	.47	.36	-	.39
3	.47	.43	.15	.13	.19	-	-	.32
4	.32	.56	.07	.07	.24	-	-	.48
				Ediciones Anaya S.A. (Spain), 1972-1975				
1	.72	.32	.32	.46	.11	-	-	.10
2	.55	.64	.14	.08	.47	.06	-	.25
3	.39	.61	.50	.50	.19	.11	-	.08
4	.20	.23	.27	.50	.23	.33	-	.37
				Santillana S.A. (Spain), 1970-1972				
1	.46	.87	.07	.07	-	-	-	.12
2	.24	.45	.11	.18	-	-	-	.33
3	.38	.50	.10	.17	.08	-	-	.30
				Laidlaw Brothers (U.S.A.), 1969				
K	.65	.80	-	.20	.06	-	-	.23
1	.73	.73	.20	.13	-	-	-	.13
2	.82	.69	-	.18	.18	.33	-	.33
				The Economy Co. (U.S.A.), 1977				
K	.50	.76	-	.08	-	-	-	.34
1	.60	.85	.06	-	.07	-	-	.19
2	.85	.69	.06	.31	-	-	-	.21
				Cannbe (U.S.A.), 1972				
1	.17	.54	.12	.40	.24	-	-	.46
3	.32	.43	.04	.49	.13	-	-	.21
4	.42	.71	.02	.23	.23	.06	-	.23
				Minerva Books (U.S.A., 1979, Gr. 1), (Spain, 1969 Gr. 2 & 3)				
1	.57	.43	.81	.43	-	-	-	-
2	1.00	.33	-	-	1.00	-	-	-
3	.67	.67	-	-	.33	.67	-	-